

# EXHIBIT D

Dear Honorable Judge Hector Gonzalez,

I want to first start by stating that I am indeed guilty of all the charges brought against me. I am deeply remorseful for creating victims out of many of my closest friends and acquaintances; all of whom trusted me with a significant portion of their hard-earned money that I selfishly squandered to fund a crippling addiction. I would also like to preface that one thing I have never done, nor will I ever do, is call the crimes I have committed a mistake. I wholeheartedly believe mistakes are made by certain unintentional mishaps in quick judgement. Initially, I had the purest of intentions and never sought to commit a single crime as that as you will come to see goes against my nature of the person I molded myself to be throughout my life. Yet, whether initial intent was there or not, there simple is no excuse, addiction or not, for being a condescending and patagial liar; a thief. I fully acknowledge the severity and harmful repercussions of my decisions. All I can do is accept complete responsibility for my actions, ask the victims and their families for their sincere forgiveness, and simply submit to the painted finger of God's judgement. The reality is I am writing this in the confines of my six by nine prison cell as a result of no-one else's fault but my own. My goal in writing this is to be completely candid and honest about who I am as a person and layout a detailed blueprint for having a positive impact on my community post-release.

My early years were filled with zinc fences and barefoot. I grew up in one of the roughest "ghetto" communities in Kingston, Jamaica, called Waterhouse. My friends and I sought refuge in the nearby gully, where residents threw their garbage that piled as high as thirty feet and would pave our way down to our little slice of heaven. We used empty buckets to make the goalposts and played football until the brightness of the sun neglected us and we could no longer see the ball. My mom had told me the first word I ever spoke was "ball." So, it was no surprise that my sanctuary was between those goalposts with the ball at my feet. I became pretty good and was always chosen to be the captain, the leader. I went on to receive an athletics scholarship to attend one of the best all-boys schools in Jamaica named Calabar High School. In those days I lived, breathed, and if I could, eat football. School, grades, education, was secondary and to be honest I was horrible at it. But, school and church was a mandatory thing living with Mama Gwenny, my grandmother. Mama Gwenny was the most gentle and kind-hearted person. Yet, she ruled with an iron-fist or the closest leather belt she could find. If that was to no avail, she wouldn't hesitate to call my mother who by then had migrated along with my two younger sisters to America. In the hopes of not wanting to disappoint my mother I stayed out of any and all trouble. When all my friends were doing drugs I remained the only outlier, indignant, I always refrained from any sort of corrupt or troubling ways. However, trouble and uneasiness came in different forms and it was a normality in Waterhouse, a place that was encompassed in street violence and hopelessness. I would see most of my friends, many of whom were significantly smarter than I was resort to becoming a "gunman" or "gangster." Many nights residents were warned to go inside early by these gangsters because a shootout was going to happen. Myriad of gunshots would echo outside and I would pray to a God, who I didn't fully believe in, to protect

my grandmother and I. On several occasions we would wake to the deep cries of a mother, folk of police officers, yellow-tape, and a dead body on the ground. Yet, it is in this poverty stricken “ghetto” I had some of my fondest memories like playing cricket, marbles, dominoes, flying kites, and eating some of the best food in the world cooked by my neighbor Miss Birdy. It is also within this community I would be bestowed with the fundamental knowledge of hard work, determination, and most importantly respect; especially towards any elder. The dichotomy of Waterhouse I would come to find is that it epitomizes both a deep sense of hopelessness, yet represents the simplest and sweetest joy in life.

I migrated to the United States when I was fifteen. When I arrived in New York where my family had settled, I kept marveling at the size of this country, its vastness. America was the land of opportunity, hope, and pursuit of happiness. If for nothing else here I knew I had a future, for that, I embraced America. She infused me with the optimism that made her so great. For the first time in my life, I fathomed becoming something more than a football player, or “soccer” as I would now come to call it as to not confuse others. Maybe it was the lack of friends at first that forced me in the comforting arms of reading books. However, at fifteen years old and for the first time in my life I read a book. Books injected me with intellectual vitamins. With that I excelled in school always either being first or second in all my class. To the displeasure and envy of many of the students who’ve been at that school for years, the new kid, me, won the title of “Student of the Year.” For that, I received a trophy that was taller than I was. Seeing the beaming smile on my mother’s face and my younger sisters looking in awe infused me with a sense of pride. It was at that point I vowed to be successful. In my small mind I had somehow correlated success to a loner lifestyle. As a result I became a massive introvert, my new friends were now William Shakespeare, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, Richard Wright, Charles Dickens, Maya Angelou, among others. Nevertheless, I still played soccer and I was even made the captain of the varsity team only my freshman year. “I was the quintessential leader,” my coach had said. What he meant, I had no idea. His response was that it wasn’t a manner of seniority but the fact that I carried myself with respect for everyone, people looked to me for advice, I had the best grades among all the athletes and I was the hardest worker in any room I entered. I would shake my head in disagreement and still thought someone my senior deserved it way more than I did. However, I obliged to his authority. I also began playing Academy soccer, traveling throughout the U.S. playing against top quality players, who were oftentimes way better than myself. Although I knew soccer wasn’t going to be my future, my career came to a sudden end. While playing I tore every single ligament in both knees (ACL, MCL, meniscuses, etc.) but by that time I had found a new career. My previous Charter High School got shut down, and I was accepted into the High School of Economics and Finance located a block away from Wall Street. Getting off the 2 or 5 train every morning, seeing people dressed in their perfectly tailored suits, and reading the latest copy of the Wall Street Journal (WSJ). I always stared in awe. Though I excelled in every math class, even served as a tutor for students struggling, looking at all the numbers on the stock performance page in the WSJ made absolutely no sense. But I was determined to understand. I began purchasing my own copy of WSJ and began googling all the

different verbiage and ridiculous acronyms. Things started making sense. Life was great and I was surrounded by my immediate family for the first time in a long while.

I would come to the realization that coming to America, was like lifting me from the certainty of turmoil and dropping me in a turmoil of uncertainty. I would first be made aware of my family's own poorness for the first time when I used an EBT card at the store. My friends commented that it was government funded money only poor people used. I felt judged. I felt ashamed. My mom, the hardest working person I know would soon thereafter lose her Nanny job and money grew slim trying to support my sisters and I. We had to resort to living in a homeless shelter that would serve as our home for the next two years. Once again hopelessness spread over my whole life, like an oil slick, and slowly but surely I wished to give up. But signing in and out of the homeless shelter every morning and evening reinvigorated me with an utmost level of new determination. I began taking full advantage of any and all opportunity that presented itself. Whether it was being the only high school student in an Economics class at Pace University. Interning at Moody's in their Accounts Payable department forty hours a week my senior year. I also developed a certain love for teaching, helping Elementary kids with learning disabilities twice a week with their homework and preparing them to take their NY ELA exams. I also applied to any and every scholarship knowing the financial hardship my family faced. By the grace of God any internship or scholarship I applied for I was somehow awarded. Unlike in Jamaica, I won scholarships not because of my athletic abilities, but now rather for academics and excelling in my studies. I won two of the most prestigious full-ride scholarships: Gates Millennium and Posse Leadership Scholarship. And chose to attend the number one entrepreneurship school in America, Babson College. I was going to be the first person in my family to go to college. Being an immigrant and a first-generation college student was a badge of honor I wore on my sleeve with pride.

If opportunity doesn't come knocking, build a door. That was the mindset I had when I stepped foot on Babson's campus in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Just a week prior I had interned at J.P. Morgan in their Investment Banking division and I knew at that moment that is what I wanted to do as my career. Though Babson presented a new set of adversities, I overcame each one and applied myself accordingly. On campus I would partake in different organizations such as the Origins of Necessary Equality, a diversity-focused housing that implemented different diversity initiatives on campus. I became the Founder and President of the first Caribbean Student Organization on campus. I helped create My Brothers Keepers to serve as mentors to students of color who were being bussed in from inner-city Boston to attend Wellesley High School. I would be involved in the Investment Banking clubs, helping students with their resumes and teaching them how to create financial models. I also grew an intense love and passion for fitness and working out, helping people with their nutrition and crafting detailed workout programs for people who asked. During the summer I interned at Deutsche Bank fine-tuning my Investment Banking skills, but mostly making presentations look prettier. Nonetheless, I was extremely meticulous and diligent with work. I would receive great feedback

and reviews commending me on my work ethic, great listening skill, ability to take initiative, and keen attention to detail. After several summer internships I landed my full-time dream job prior to my senior year in college. Sitting at the Pier downtown staring at the Statue of Liberty in the distance, I called my mom telling her the excited news of my job offer with tears running down my face. Despite the tribulations and trust me there were many. I was going to be a black man working on Wall Street. Getting off the same 2 and 5 train stop I got off back in High School. However, now I was going to be the one wearing the nice tailored suits. I ended up finishing up my last year and graduated college with honors.

My new tailored shirts and suits, colored coordinated lined my small closet. I would hit the ground running working as a Banker. I was always curious and inquisitive so I didn't hesitate to ask questions or stay late nights constantly researching something I just learned. I would be the only Black person in my entire group of over one hundred people, something I sadly had gotten used to. I pledged I would start using whatever platform or influence, despite me only being a mere cog or screw in a gigantic machine to mentor other people of color. I would take all the different opportunities at work to visit different Universities (Duke, Middlebury, Penn, etc.) and would try to convince people of color to think about joining the banking industry and also served as mentor to many. Yet the harsh realities of working long hours was always the ultimate deterrent for me. For me, though the job was the long hours, I never complained once and just developed a strict and regimented schedule I abide by everyday. I would go to the gym 7AM, work 9AM to 7PM, workout again, then go to the office and work from 8:30PM to 2AM. Having a weekend I wasn't in the office both days was a luxury. Nevertheless, this was what I worked tirelessly for, banking became my life. But creeping in the back while I was enjoying a promising career was the darkness of an addiction I never wanted to acknowledge existed.

One of my earliest memories of my mom is her sitting amongst four or five other women in a gambling house yelling "my baby [me] need some new shoes." A few years later I would be sitting in that same gambling house. At first it began with the grown-ups sending me to play "cash pot" a numbers game similar to playing the lotto. Around the same time I was gambling amongst my friends, playing marbles for elastic bands. I was the envy of every kid in the community because my elastic bands I accumulated over the years stretched beyond a hundred yards. Then at around ten years of age it became me playing dominoes and drinking the occasional Guinness with the older guys or being the only kid at the bingo table with all women playing for money. Gambling and drinking was embedded in my everyday life and became as normal as brushing my teeth. And I was "good." Once I won so much at a popular Jamaican gambling game called "Crown and Anchor," that the old Rastafarian man operating the game banned me because I was "too little to be that good." At my age I had somehow convinced myself that I saw patterns others didn't recognize. When I migrated to America that mentality had changed, mostly as a result of now being in a country where underage gambling and drinking was against the law. However, once I became eighteen and started making money from my summer internships and my career on Wall Street I resorted to my previous bad habits. Yet

this time, this new urge to gamble came over me with the force of a category five hurricane. Besides giving my mom a portion of that month's rent, I would gamble every other dollar from the rest of my paycheck and bonuses. This went on for a few years and with gambling came the additive urge to always drink alcohol. Caribbean Rum became my drink of choice and my escape from my reality of losing hundreds of thousands of dollars of my hard-earned money. In the confines of my room or at a casino I would drink until the pain ceased to exist. Alcohol understood me and in the comforting arms of Wray & Nephew rum, like between those goal posts, served as my new sanctuary. I had thought addiction, a gambling one at that, was all just in my head, meaning it was not at all real, imaginary, fake, an embarrassment, a weakness. So for years I went on betting, drinking, thinking I did not want those who thought of me in their high praises to see this weakness, see my Achilles heel. But see, once I settle into a story about my pain, I became extremely reluctant to challenge it. It took me a while, but soon I would realize it was indeed all in my head, but in a very different way. It is not imaginary. It is very real. The compulsion diminished my capacity to determine right from wrong. To thoroughly think about things and apply common sense as I had done throughout every other instance in my life. Yet my ego and pride made me think that I needed only myself. My ego protected me. It guards me. It is necessary. But my ego and pride grew too big, thus cutting me off from the possibility of connection. I only felt safe behind this ego wall and dismantling it wouldn't just feel like a jail break, it would feel like a D-Day invasion. I was enveloped in my gambling and substance abuse addiction and had come to an inflection point. A monumental change was needed or my life as I knew it would cease to exist. One of the first, and one of the most critical, is to stop thinking I can solve my addictions by myself. It is only when I accepted that I indeed had a problem and sought out Gamblers Anonymous (GA) I saw that the struggle was a collective struggle rather than individual. Collective struggle is the solution, or at the very least, the essential foundation for it. There is a deep sense of belonging to a tribe. Just like a bee goes haywire if it loses its hive, a human will go haywire if he or she loses that connection to the group. Hence, when I felt a deep sense of not belonging, whether to Wall Street or College friends, I was puzzled by my own sadness and sought relief in gambling and alcohol. But now attending GA served as that new tribe. One that held me accountable and provided a safe space and judgement free zone to honestly talk about the demons that haunt us and will probably haunt us for the rest of our lives. Yet, there I was standing up in front of everyone, not ashamed of saying, "My name is Rashawn and I am a compulsive gambler."

It was as if someone took the sharpest dagger they could find and threw it piercing my heart. My outward appearance was very stoic, one could've even said calm and collective. However, on the inside, I was having an asthma attack. I couldn't think. I couldn't breathe. Your Honor's words echoed, "I hereby order the defendant bond revoked and for him to turn himself into Brooklyn MDC on Tuesday by 2PM." Firstly, I truly want to thank Your Honor from the bottom of my heart for making the decision to send me to MDC. I needed this wake up call to fully embark on a mental and spiritual journey. Though I must admit the immediate feeling after Your Honor's decision was one of resentment. I failed to accept responsibility for whatever brought me in front of you in the first place. In actuality, my resentment wasn't towards you,

your decision, or any decision or ruling you will make in the future. The source of this resentment was a failure to own my own life, claim it as my own, take full responsibility for it and say to myself, "I'm the one running the show here, so whatever happens, I'm solely the one that is responsible." A true understanding of this fact produced an exhilarating sense of real freedom.

Having spent a few months here in MDC serves as the ultimate deterrent to never commit another crime ever again. Your Honor, it is being in the confines of MDC that I saw how truly inhumane inmates are treated and the environment in which we are forced to live in. Whether it was witnessing someone being stabbed over thirty times, being locked in our cells twenty-four hours a day for over three weeks, only being allowed to take a ten-minute shower every seventy-two hours, and being served unpalatable food infested with maggots you wouldn't dare feed to your dog. I can assure you having experienced all of this that that inmate who then wishes to reoffend should be checked into a mental asylum unit. Thus, as I write this, I can promise you, I, unlike such inmate have indeed learned my lesson. I say all of this not looking for an ounce of pity or sympathy, but to say, it is only after the deepest darkness the greatest joy can come. And its only after prison the greatest appreciation for freedom can come. Today is the tomorrow I worried about yesterday. So, I'm not just serving time here in MDC. I am making the time serve me. A time for true reflection and planning for an impactful positive future. Sitting in the six-by-nine-foot cell I have come to the realization that my grandmother was right all along. There is a God. He is a merciful one. He has forgive that I have neglected him all these years, forgive that I have betrayed, lied, and sinned with impunity only to turn to him in my hour of need. I pray He is as merciful, benevolent, and gracious as His book says He is.

The Holy Spirit has made me new. It has revitalized my moribund body with purpose. A man who has no conscience, no goodness, does not suffer. So I think that good, real good, is born out of one's remorse. And true redemption is when guilt leads to good. Moreover, you do not become good by trying to be good, but by finding the goodness that is already within you, and allowing that goodness to emerge. I've come to the realization that what emerges is a fundamental change in my state of consciousness. I know my options have changed, but I am still the same person with the same potential. The crimes I have committed do not define me nor will I let it define my future. See I understand that no matter where I end up it doesn't have to be the absolute determinant of my ultimate fulfillment. In regards to my future I hope as I move forward the victims and their families can find it within their hearts to be merciful and forgive me for the wrongs that I have done. I pledge to work every second to make amends by making them whole for what I selfishly robbed them of. I plan on going back to school to get my Master's in Education. I plan on becoming a history or math high school teacher within my East Flatbush community. I will give back and open a philanthropic educational center in Waterhouse, for kids who like myself dare to dream about becoming more than the preconceived notions and stereotypes society has given them. I know being a felon and the obstacles that lies ahead. But

despite my wrongs, my heart is good and my intentions are pure. I will once again make my mom proud.

I plead with Your Honor to consider the atypical nature of my conduct when making your sentencing decision. I plead to consider the realities that which a crippling gambling and substance addiction played in my offenses. I plead for Your Honor to sentence me to time served which is minimally sufficient to reflect the seriousness of the crime, promote respect for the law, provide a just punishment and promote general deterrence to never commit a single crime ever again. I plead for Your Honor to consider the additional stringiest release conditions that will further promote deterrence and adherence to the law. I pledge to continue making strides to overcome addiction by attending GA and AA meetings, one-on-one therapy sessions, and any beneficial treatment to help counter this sickness. Yet though I plead and pledge, God says every sinner, which I willingly and fully accept that I am, should be punished in a manner befitting his sin. So whatever Your Honor's decision is comes May 8th, I am at peace with it. I thank you for reading this rather lengthy letter and hope if for nothing else you respect my honesty and openness.

Thanks,

Rashawn Russell